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ABSTRACT

This report presents the National Agenda for Achieving Better Results for Children and Youth with Disabilities as developed by a forum of representatives from major disability advocacy groups, direct service providers, families, related services personnel, researchers, teacher trainers, teachers, and administrators. Section 1 articulates the need for a national agenda and briefly addresses the relationship between the National Agenda and the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act, the National Education Goals, the Goals 2000: Educate America Act, and other existing special education and civil rights statutes. Section 2 presents the mission, guiding principles, rights and commitments, and vision. The vision for the year 2000 is for a unified education system with the following components: enriched and broadened appreciation of diversity, school-community collaboration, well-prepared personnel, a professional development system, appropriate policy and financing, specific accountability, effective systemic teaching and learning, and appropriate technology. Section 3 describes the issues, barriers, urgencies, and strategic activities recommended by the Forum participants. The following issues are identified: (1) planned charge and values clarification; (2) diversity/multiculturalism; (3) advocacy; (4) interagency collaboration; (5) financing; (6) policy and legislation; (7) compliance monitoring and program accountability; (8) assessment; (9) research knowledge base and knowledge dissemination; (10) local education agency program development and practices; (11) technology; and (12) professional development. (DB)

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The National Agenda

for Achieving Better Results for Children and Youth with Disabilities

June 1994

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The participants in the Forum process should be thanked and commended. They are dedicated to achieving better results for students with disabilities and are willing to expend time and energy to facilitate that goal. It should be noted that this is a national agenda and NOT a federal agenda. While the Department encourages full discussion about these important issues, its role in the development of the National Agenda was one of facilitator and as one member of a Forum of many participants. The positions taken in the National Agenda represent the collective thinking of all Forum participants and do not necessarily represent the views of any one of the Forum participants, including the Department. Lastly, the participants' commitment and conviction as they worked toward a national agenda demonstrate their unrelenting concern about better opportunities for students with disabilities and their families.

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I. INTRODUCTION

Why is a National Agenda Necessary?

In 1975, when Congress enacted the Education for All Handicapped Children Act (now the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA)), it was estimated that one million children were totally excluded from the public school system and another four million "[did] not receive appropriate educational services which would enable them to have full equality of opportunity." (20 U.S.C. 1401(b)). The Act sought to remedy this situation by: 1) providing free appropriate public education (FAPE) for each child with a disability, and 2) providing procedural due process safeguards to protect the rights of children with disabilities and their families. The expectation was that these requirements would ensure that each child received an effective education.

Now, almost 20 years later, we can point to the following accomplishments: (1) all children and youth with disabilities are now a part of the public education system and guaranteed FAPE, (2) a significant number of children and youth with significant disabilities, previously receiving educational services in residential institutions, are attending public schools, (3) the needs of many children and youth with learning disabilities now are being recognized and served, (4) a significant number of children and youth with disabilities are exiting public education and gaining employment and are living independently in the community, and (5) some youth are entering postsecondary education; youth with sensory impairments enrolled in postsecondary school at about the same rates as youth in the general population.

Although there has been significant progress resulting from the enactment of IDEA, the educational results for many students with disabilities are still unacceptable. In recent years, there has been a growing consensus that, in addition to protecting the rights of children and youth with disabilities, attention must be paid to the quality of education they receive and to the results they achieve. Information from the National Longitudinal Transition Study (NLTS) has demonstrated that results for students with disabilities are less than satisfactory (SRI International, 1993):

- A disproportionate number of students with disabilities dropped out of school. Overall about 38 percent of students with disabilities dropped out of school (8% in middle school, 30% in high school), a higher rate than for students in the general population (24%). Dropout rates were especially high for youth with serious emotional disturbances, learning disabilities, mental retardation, and other health impairments;

- Almost half of the students with serious emotional disturbance dropped out of school. After being out of school for up to five years, 75 percent of the students with serious emotional disturbances who dropped out of school had been arrested;

- Two-thirds of the secondary school students failed at least one course at some point in their four years of school. Most of these students were classified as seriously emotionally disturbed or learning disabled;

- Relatively few students with disabilities move into postsecondary education. After being out of high school 3 to 5 years, fewer than one-third had gone on to postsecondary education. This is less than half the rate of youth in general education;

- Failing courses increases the likelihood of dropping out of school and decreases employment opportunity; and

- Forty-six percent of the youth with disabilities who had been out of school for up to two years were competitively employed. Three years later the competitive employment rate for students with disabilities had increased to 57 percent. However, this rate was still lower than that for youth in the general population (69%).

In addition to results for students with disabilities being unacceptable, reports such as A Nation at Risk (1983) and Time for Results: The Governor's 1991 Report on Education (1991) criticized the American educational system in general and called for a greater focus on improving student results. The widespread dissatisfaction with the educational system has led to the current education reform movement. A major milestone in the education reform occurred in 1989 when the Nation's Governors met and agreed upon Six National Education Goals. These goals were based on high expectations for all students and are now incorporated in the recently enacted Goals 2000: Educate America Act, a comprehensive national response to achieving the National Education Goals. In addition, the Goals 2000 Act—this Administration's program for change—will dramatically reform our schools by establishing high academic and skills standards and providing support to states and communities to help them reach those standards.

Goals 2000 is fully consistent with and complements both the spirit and intent of IDEA, Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 and the Americans with Disabilities Act. By improving both quality and equality in education nationwide, Goals 2000 will increase opportunities for all students. In a statement about Goals 2000, Secretary Riley noted that, "by setting internationally competitive standards, Goals 2000 will make schools more responsible for improving results for all students."

A national agenda for achieving better results for children and youth with disabilities is absolutely critical in ensuring that children and youth with disabilities will achieve improved results through education reform efforts. A national agenda will:

- Guide national, state, and local reform efforts in establishing a unified system of education that includes all children and youth;
- Guide legislation and policy at the federal, state, and local levels, and define priorities for research, training and service efforts—all of which influence how individuals with disabilities live, learn, work, and play; and
- Provide focus, coordination, and a common ground for educators, advocates, families, legislators, and policy-makers concerned with improving the quality of life for children and youth with disabilities and their families.

The National Agenda will focus our efforts and resources at the national, state, and local levels, so that children and youth with disabilities will attain improved educational results which will enable them to fully participate in all aspects of American life. The National Agenda will help to move us toward the society President Clinton envisioned when he pledged to work for, "inclusion not exclusion, independence not dependence, and empowerment not paternalism."

The Process: Developing a National Agenda

In January 1993, a forum composed of representatives from the major disability advocacy groups, direct service providers, families, related services personnel, researchers, teacher trainers, teachers, and administrators was facilitated by the U.S. Department of Education to develop a national agenda for achieving better results for children and youth with disabilities. Forum participants developed priority issues and drafted strategies to address each issue.

Strategy Development Teams joined the process in March 1993 to: 1) expand and broaden the perspectives represented at the initial forum; 2) review each issue; and 3) expand the number of individuals and groups involved in clarifying these issues and strategies.

In September 1993, the Forum membership was expanded and the Forum reconvened to finalize The National Agenda for Achieving Better Results for Children and Youth with Disabilities. The participants:

- Developed a vision for improved education for children and youth with disabilities as we approach the turn of the century;
- Refined the mission, guiding principles, rights and commitments, and the issue statements;
- Identified barriers and urgencies for each issue; and
- Defined strategic activities to resolve the issues.

All of these efforts will help to ensure that The National Agenda will result in better results for children and youth with disabilities.

The Report

Section I articulates the need for a national agenda for achieving better results for children and youth with disabilities. Section I also addresses the relationship between The National Agenda and the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act, the National Education Goals, the Goals 2000: Educate America Act, and other existing special education and civil rights statutes.

Section II contains the mission, guiding principles, rights and commitments and vision. Section III describes the issues, barriers, urgencies, and strategic activities developed by the Form participants.

Sections II and III reflect the views of the Forum participants and have been edited only for readability and clarity. Care was taken to avoid redundancies and to present the content in a concise format.

II. MISSION

All children and youth will have the right and responsibility to participate as members of the global community. In concert with the Goals 2000: Educate America Act and the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA), it is our mission and in the national interest, for all children and youth, including those with disabilities, to be educated to their fullest potential. Further, all children and youth will have the opportunity and necessary supports to become caring, productive, socially involved citizens who are committed to life-long learning.

This mission statement is supported by a set of guiding principles, values, responsibilities and commitments, as well as a vision of that which can be achieved by the year 2000.

Guiding Principles

This document reflects the belief of the Forum participants that a national agenda must reflect two components:

1. A research-based conceptual framework that will govern:

    a. The teaching and learning processes;
    b. Results and standards, including skills to be achieved;
    c. Models of collaboration;
    d. Student and staff readiness;
    e. Processes of change; and
    f. Assessment and accountability measures and procedures.

2. Shared fiscal responsibility among various levels of the public and private sectors.

Rights and Commitments

The National Agenda reflects the belief that certain rights and commitments will be inherent in an effective educational system and must be honored. These rights and commitments include:

1. Children and youth with disabilities and their families must have access to appropriate options designed to meet their individual needs.

2. Educators, families, and society must prepare children and youth, including those with disabilities, for inclusion in an integrated society.

3. Educators, families, and society must provide all children and youth optimal and appropriate educational opportunities in schools, classrooms, and other instructional settings with their peers who represent diverse cultures, languages, and abilities.

As the 21st century approaches, full implementation of the IDEA is imperative to help ensure that each child or youth with a disability receives the best possible educational opportunities that contribute to successful results.

Vision

The vision for the year 2000 begins with images of children and youth with disabilities having access to supports and services that lead to self-actualization, self-determination, and independence. As highly motivated

learners with a strong sense of values and of their own identity, these children and youth will have the supports necessary to ensure a high quality of life. Children and youth will have the ability for making informed personal choices to achieve their personal best in each of the National Education Goals.

This vision and national agenda are fully compatible with the National Education Goals and the intent of the Goals 2000: Educate America Act. In the year 2000, the education system will be unified and will ensure the achievement of these critical student results. This unified system will contain the key components described below.

Enriched and Broadened Appreciation of Diversity. The re-invented schools in the unified system will value and respect the rich diversity of children, youth, and adults representing many ethnicities, races, language backgrounds, and human capabilities. Such schools will advocate and demonstrate multiculturalism in attitudes, climate, personnel practices, instructional materials, and perspectives. Each student will experience the best educational opportunities that include personalized programs and placements based on his or her unique needs. All children and youth, including those with disabilities, will have a full array of services and accommodations to effectively facilitate academic and social inclusion. Small and safe learning communities within the school will respond to and accommodate diverse learning styles and will establish appropriate work results for each individual.

School-Community Collaboration. Dynamic and interactive teaming will occur between the school and all other organizations and community groups that serve children and youth and their families. Schools will link community services, resources, and employment opportunities through appropriate transition planning for all students.

Personnel. Schools will employ capable and well-prepared professionals and paraprofessionals. Persons with disabilities and persons from diverse ethnic backgrounds will hold a variety of key positions and leadership roles throughout the school system. Qualified personnel who provide education and related services will reflect the increasing number of individuals with disabilities and individuals from diverse multicultural and linguistics backgrounds. These quality professionals and paraprofessionals will receive the necessary training and support to meet the needs of the nation's children and youth.

Professional Development. In the year 2000, a professional development system will be driven by the needs of children and youth, their families, and their teachers. Professional personnel will participate in collaborative, interdisciplinary approaches to education and related services, with families and children and youth as important partners. Professional development options, designed and delivered through unified training programs, will capitalize on the knowledge and experience of teacher-scholars.

Policy and Financing. Policy development and financing are based on principles that build collaborative relationships and belonging in the communities where children and youth receive their education and related services. The IDEA mandates will be fully implemented and refined on an ongoing basis to effectively increase and maintain the design and delivery of a free appropriate public education. Individual needs, not disability categories or labels, will drive an education system. Educational and financial policies will support instructional programs. Instructional programs will meet students' needs, not categorical labels.

Students with disabilities and their families will participate fully in developing, redesigning, and expanding policy at the local, state, and federal levels. Refinements in policy and financing focus on supporting education and related service programs to achieve better results for children and youth. New, equitable, and stable financing systems and procedures will provide flexibility to use and account for funds. These new systems and procedures will enable greater and more effective collaboration across agencies.

Specific Accountability for Better Results for Children and Youth. In the year 2000, a unified educational system will incorporate equitable standards and high expectations for all children and youth. Alternative assessment mechanisms will ensure that all children and youth are included in measures of results and in progress or achievement reports. In addition, incentives and sanctions will support the achievement of these results. Assessments for children and youth will identify and evaluate the learning opportunities needed by all children and youth to achieve better results.

Effective Systemic Teaching and Learning. In the year 2000, a curriculum based on higher expectations and clear results will drive a conceptual framework to develop academic, daily living, and vocational skills for all children and youth. Educators and community members will demonstrate shared responsibility for student success. Schools will adopt and expand valid, effective practices using current and available knowledge and research bases. Continuous assessment and monitoring of both student results and system effectiveness will use alternative methods and instruments. Effective instructional practices will include necessary extended school day, year-round schools, effective grouping, and adequately equipped classrooms. Further, instructional programs will emphasize literacy for all children and youth, including those for whom English is a second language and those who communicate through alternative language or assistive devices.

Appropriate Technology. In the year 2000, significantly expanded use of and access to appropriate multimedia and assistive technology will support all areas of education including instruction, personnel preparation, and communication. Schools will continually maintain and update technological equipment and systems. In addition, through effective use of technology and other strategies, all children and youth will have access to a full range of activities in the unified educational system.

The mission statement, guiding principles, values, rights, commitments, responsibilities, and vision statement are addressed through a series of issues and strategic activities. These issues and strategic activities are discussed in the next section.

III. ISSUES AND ACTIVITIES

To achieve better results for children and youth, issues that are identified as barriers must be removed. All of us must engage in activities that will help remove these barriers. The following issues are barriers to achieving better results; the strategic activities are part of a national agenda designed to overcome barriers and move our nation toward realizing better results for children and youth with disabilities and their families.

Issue One
Planned Change and Values Clarification

In the arena of planned change and values clarification, we face piecemeal, fragmented, and often compartmentalized approaches to change implemented within a traditional organizational structure.

Examples of Barriers:

1. Program planning, funding, and policy systems for special education are separate from those for regular education;
2. Educational planning activities frequently exclude people with disabilities;
3. A heritage of paternalism and protectionism relative to people with disabilities prevents bold change;
4. Planning becomes easily constrained by the perception of fiscal limitations;
5. Turfism, borne out of the fear of "losing what we've got," reinforces compartmentalization and feeds a reluctance to risk doing things differently; and
6. People hold onto an outmoded paradigm in which people with disabilities are viewed as marginal and the special education system as confrontative.

Urgency:

The issue of planned change and values clarification must be addressed if a responsive, unified educational system for all children and youth is to be realized. Full participation by an inclusive representation of stakeholders is critical to valuing diversity, supporting self-determination for disabled children and youth and their families, and providing opportunities for all children and youth to achieve their highest level of competence.

Strategic Activities:

1. Develop in every community and at all levels of education a common vision for a unified educational system that involves participation by and input from representatives of all stakeholder groups.
2. Integrate health and human services into the educational system.
3. Finance inclusive, unified approaches to education.
4. Provide meaningful interdisciplinary training and collaboration experiences using a peer-to-peer model (disabled and nondisabled children and youth of the same chronological age).
5. Involve families, businesses, community citizens (including those with disabilities), educators, and other professionals in planning activities.

6. Promote partnerships and linkages between parent advocacy groups and nondisability groups.

7. Coordinate and implement policies derived from various levels of the educational system.

8. Revise regularly and systematically the shared vision and plans based on student results and new knowledge.

Issue Two
Diversity/Multiculturalism

Our culture does not adequately value individual and group differences. Race, gender, disability, ethnicity, language (other than English), learning styles, and religion are among the areas in which institutional and/or individual biases exist.

Examples of Barriers:

1. Expressions of this bias may result in: discipline problems; disruption and violence in the schools; inappropriate tracking; conflict; absenteeism; isolation; and low expectations.

Urgency:

Large numbers of children and youth are not receiving an appropriate education.

Strategic Activities:

1. Provide appropriate staff to meet diverse needs by:
   - ensuring sufficient qualified staff;
   - promoting respect for cultural and developmental differences through instructional and professional accreditation standards; and
   - creating class sizes that will enable the diverse individual needs of children and youth to be adequately met.
2. Review indicators that provide evidence of diversity relative to race, disability, ethnicity, religion, gender, age, lifestyles, and the experiential backgrounds of children, youth, and their teachers.
3. Provide ongoing staff development that addresses the diverse learning and behavioral needs of all children and youth by:
   - financing training initiatives at the preservice and inservice levels that are sensitive to individual diversity; and
   - training higher education faculty to:
     a. provide meaningful training to practitioners (e.g., teachers, school psychologists) regarding awareness, sensitivity, assessment approaches, teaching strategies, etc.; and
     b. recruit students with diverse backgrounds into education and related services preservice training programs.
4. Reflect diversity in the school system's mission statements, which is promoted and monitored by school officials at all levels.
5. Implement culturally and linguistically sensitive assessment practices.

6. Implement curricula that are appropriate and sensitive to the culture, language, and learning styles of children and youth by:

   - financing initiatives that redesign curricula to promote developmentally appropriate and culturally diverse practices; and

   - providing adequate supplementary materials and equipment that are developmentally appropriate and culturally diverse.

7. Address individual family needs by involving families in all facets of special and general education, recognizing their unique cultural backgrounds.

8. Eliminate tracking of children and youth based on race, gender, ability, disability, etc.

9. Ensure all children and youth equal opportunity and access to all school and extracurricular activities.

10. Implement awareness and training in a school climate in which all children and youth are valued and feel a sense of belonging, regardless of diversity.

11. Finance and provide other resources including staff development to meet the needs of children and youth whose language is not English.

12. Provide ongoing opportunities in the school to celebrate diversity.

13. Involve community institutions and individuals representative of diverse cultures, including persons with disabilities, at all levels within the school.

14. Implement student assessment procedures in accordance with Goals 2000 to monitor achievement of diverse cultures as compared to the achievement of majority children and youth.

Comment:

In valuing institutionalized (school and community) cultural pluralism, we recognize the importance of cross-cultural shared values in the United States.

Issue Three
Advocacy

Advocacy on behalf of individuals with disabilities is not sufficiently valued by the educational enterprise.

Examples of Barriers:

1. Self-advocacy is often not perceived as important;
2. Opportunities for learning methods of advocacy are not provided;
3. Insufficient knowledge of children and youth needs, services, and laws clouds decision making;
4. Because consumers do not have meaningful input into program planning, advocacy is often necessary to correct errors and omissions;
5. Families are not adequately sharing planning responsibility with children and youth;
6. Rigid school procedures do not accommodate parental involvement;
7. Citizens with disabilities do not have a meaningful presence in the schools;
8. Families do not advocate because of fear of being perceived as pushy or of retaliation; and
9. School personnel perceive threats to their authority when advocates challenge their decisions, actions, or inactions.

Urgency:

Service provision, policy, financing, and planning are affected by this issue, making its resolution imperative.

Strategic Activities:

1. Empower all children and youth with disabilities to be self-advocates by:
   - teaching them the skills to advocate for enlightened self-interest while respecting the rights of others;
   - teaching them the advocacy skills that will lead to self-determination and provide opportunities to advocate for themselves in the schools and community, and for job opportunities; and
   - providing opportunities for them to interact with adults with disabilities.
2. Empower families by providing them with support, effective education, information, and opportunities, especially at the local level and early in the lives of the children and youth in ways that:
   - will assist them in increasing the positive growth and development of children and youth in the family;
   - are effective for all families, including culturally diverse and typically underrepresented families; and

- allow children and youth to participate in developmentally appropriate situations that lead to independence.

3. Empower advocacy groups, enabling them to appropriately impact on policy and practice by:

   - promoting partnerships and links with parent advocacy groups, including nondisability groups;
   - providing opportunities for advocacy groups to have significant and meaningful involvement in the policy decision-making process;
   - providing opportunities for individuals to learn from each other in the policy decision-making process; and
   - including teachers and administrators as student advocates.

4. Strengthen advocates' participation in policy and decision making at the local, state, and federal levels; involve consumers in the continuous monitoring, evaluating, and revising policies by:

   - including a cross-section of consumer representatives and teachers as participants in the annual evaluation of established policies;
   - inviting community stakeholders not officially associated with the educational system to react to policies;
   - providing opportunities for community stakeholders to have input in the annual review of policies; and
   - enhancing consumers and stakeholders' ability to collaborate.

Issue Four
Interagency Collaboration

The current infrastructure of service(s) delivery often promotes fragmentation, duplication, isolation, competition, and bureaucratic procedures that create barriers to effective interagency collaboration. There is a lack of family-centered "one-stop" shopping for support services and user-friendliness in their delivery.

Examples of Barriers:

1. Social services do not provide sufficient case managers (i.e., calls for services are neglected, communicate with a different person each time etc.); and

2. Infrastructure of social services is not set up for collaboration—
Department of Health is separate from Board of Education.

Urgency:

Various agencies have been established for different purposes, are usually underfinanced and do not have incentives to collaborate. At the same time, they often overlap and are excessively bureaucratic and inefficient.

Strategic Activities:

1. Duplicate and disseminate best practices of interagency collaboration to all stakeholders.

2. Collaborate to define roles and responsibilities.

3. Measure effects of collaboration on the performance of children and youth and on agency efficiency.

4. Mandate that Education be the lead agency for collaboration, with efforts to:

   - provide fiscal support for planning (i.e., time involved in team planning);
   - require that collaborating agencies' services be specified in the Individualized Education Program (IEP) and that they be required to provide what is specified;
   - supplement rather than supplant related services; and
   - provide a central location to access all services.

5. Include an enforcement mechanism in interagency agreements (e.g., the governor's role in Part H does this reasonably well for early intervention).

6. Mandate federal coordinating councils to coordinate services for children and youth with disabilities.

7. Provide incentives for medical and nursing personnel to be involved in collaboration (inclusion in health care reform agenda).

8. Provide for involvement of community-based stakeholders.

Issue Five
Financing

Financing is inadequate, crisis-based, categorical, and fragmented. Current financing policies do not adequately guarantee accessible services, ensure accountability, and allow flexibility to achieve better results in a unified system. Families often cannot successfully safeguard their rights (e.g., costs, legality).

Examples of Barriers:

1. Financing of programs for children and youth is not a high priority for our society (percentage of budget below that in other countries);
2. Human services money is used inefficiently and not collaboratively;
3. IDEA has not been financed at the authorized level;
4. There is limited and only indirect financial accountability for achieving desired results for children and youth with disabilities; and
5. Financing formulas are categorically based and promote exclusion.

Urgency:

Without adequate financing our educational system will continue to have negative consequences (i.e., dropout, unemployed, increased costs of welfare, crime, prisons) and lack of desired results.

In addition, the vision requires the collaborative use of resources across agencies.

Strategic Activities:

1. Review and revise state and federal financing systems so that there are no incentives for over-identification of children and youth and to provide incentives for school improvements.
2. Create a stable, broad-based public school financing system that a) requires meeting the needs of children and youth with disabilities who have been accurately identified, b) shares costs fairly between and among local, state, and federal sources and c) addresses the needs of high impact and poor school districts. Thus, state financing formulas are needs-focused and don't under- and overidentify.
3. Create a stable, broad-based human services financing system that is flexible and will collaborate with school systems to support the needs of all children and youth and their families.
4. Provide for adequate financing and research-based continuing education for all people involved in the academic, social, and emotional development of children and youth with disabilities.
5. Maintain financing sources for successful supports and services for children and youth with disabilities and provide incentives and rewards for school systems and personnel that demonstrate improved services for these children and youth.
6. Provide legislation that promotes financing models that result in more inclusive options with increased accountability for results.

7. Develop incentives for creative financing across programs and agencies that will support desirable results for all constituents.

8. Provide fiscal oversight.

Issue Six
Policy and Legislation

The education community is constrained in its ability to collaborate and systematically review existing laws and regulations that do not support and promote a unified educational system for all children and youth.

Examples of Barriers:

1. Children and youth with disabilities are the only children and youth covered by "special laws" (IEP, due process);
2. Early educational opportunities are not available for all children and youth; and
3. Restrictions on financing promote two separate and parallel systems.

Urgency:

A unified system depends on the resolution of this issue.

Strategic Activities:

1. Provide a full range of services and opportunities to ensure access to appropriate supports and services based on the individual needs of children and youth.
2. Permit flexible policy interpretation that encourages maximum improvement of supports and services through innovation and demonstrates broader program accountability with better results for children and youth.
3. Promote and implement unified administrative policies for all children and youth (including those with disabilities) that respond to the individual needs of children and youth.
4. Implement administrative policies and program incentives that promote collaboration and coordination across all programs within, between, and among social health systems.
5. Identify and implement administrative policies to streamline paperwork, recordkeeping, and data collection, balancing the desirable reduction in paperwork with the needed accountability. Include flexibility in documentation of time and effort so that special education resources can be used with other program resources to serve children and youth with like needs.
6. Implement administrative policies that encourage long-term and systemic change at all levels, but that do not provide flexibility without accountability.
7. Involve all constituents in:
   - identifying, developing, and implementing effective (procedural) requirements that assure both individual and systems safeguards, including the rights of families to actively participate while eliminating barriers to reform;
   - defining a unified educational system that will provide and coordinate services needed to enable all children and youth to learn and will mandate agency-linked and collaborative services. The

unified system will be research-based, accountable, culturally competent, supportive of teachers and related service personnel;

- defining and implementing a unified accountability system based on standards and results that include all children and youth;
- reviewing current state and federal statutes and regulations to determine if there is a valid need for change or clarification in existing laws and regulations; and
- developing and implementing any refinements of existing laws and regulations that focus on better results for children and youth with disabilities.

8. Providing legislation that promotes consumer-friendly effective models for resolving disputes, e.g., mediation.

Issue Seven
Compliance Monitoring and Program Accountability

The procedural nature of Part B of IDEA has caused state and federal monitoring procedures to overemphasize procedural and paper compliance, which is often unrelated to improving the overall system or school district priorities.

Examples of Barriers:

1. Inconsistent local, state, and federal monitoring efforts;
2. Poorly qualified monitoring staff;
3. Enforcement of paper compliance at the state and federal levels rather than the provision of technical assistance and program improvement; and
4. Compliance based on inputs rather than outputs.

Urgency:

Compliance monitoring procedures must prevent subversion of congressional intent.

Strategic Activities:

1. Define program results and develop indicators that focus on results at the local, state, and building levels in collaboration with children and youth, staff, families, and community members.
2. Define educational and functional results for children and youth and develop indicators at the local, state, and building levels in collaboration with children and youth, staff, families, and community members.
3. Integrate technical assistance with monitoring at the state and federal levels and coordinate special education monitoring with other program evaluation and accreditation, such as combined visits and shared data, to reduce duplication of effort.
4. Support improvement and promote monitoring systems that allow for local alternative procedural parameters contingent upon strong accountability and protection of the rights of children and youth.
5. Implement accountability systems that monitor program effectiveness, balancing process with results, and provide incentives for program improvement and sanctions for noncompliance.
6. Promote the development and dissemination of programs and practices that demonstrate effective educational and community results.
7. Revise preservice and continuing education to ensure an understanding and application of accountability systems for children and youth.
8. Implement assessment practices that are linked to program improvement and best results for children and youth.

9. Implement program accountability systems at the local, state, and federal levels that cut across programs, including special education, Chapter 1, etc., that focus on overall program improvement and support the development of a unified, coordinated system.

10. Provide ongoing assessment of consumer satisfaction with programs and services providers.

Issue Eight
Assessment

The current assessment process is being overused for labeling and placement purposes rather than for instructional planning. Alternative methods of assessing the skills and needs of children and youth should be developed.

Examples of Barriers:

1. Over-identification of students as having disabilities (based on race, language, ethnicity, certain disability categories);
2. Large amounts of money needed for programming are spent on assessment;
3. Tests are culturally biased, not functional, and are administered and interpreted by untrained personnel; and
4. The assessment process is often static rather than dynamic.

Urgency:

Children and youth are often classified and placed based on the results of standardized measures that have limited relevance, accuracy, and validity for these purposes and are of little use in instructional planning.

Strategic Activities:

1. Reduce reliance on norm-referenced testing.
2. Increase emphasis on alternative assessments; validate assessment results through observation in various settings and use of continuous progress measures (e.g., curriculum-based measurement, portfolio assessment, authentic assessment).
3. Identify measurable results of performance for all children and youth.
4. Refine (or design) and implement assessments that address the needs of children and youth which allow for eligibility determinations and that relate more closely to planning instruction (such as identifying children's and youths' learning styles and strengths) and measuring student results.
5. Conduct studies and finance demonstration projects to explore the feasibility and use of alternative assessments that address the needs of children and youth.
6. Train staff, through a comprehensive system of personnel development, in methods of assessment that address the needs of children and youth and effectively utilize assessment results in decision making.
7. Make assessment reports clear, concise, goal-directed, and understandable by families.
8. Revise and clarify existing state and federal regulations to implement assessments that directly address the needs of children and youth.
9. End state and federal reliance on categorical labeling.

10. Ensure the inclusion of children and youth with disabilities in statewide testing processes.

11. Provide ongoing assessments to maintain and support appropriate teaching strategies.

Issue Nine
Research Knowledge Base and Knowledge Dissemination

The current knowledge base in its present form is often not usable and accessible by teachers, families, and other professionals and consumers.

Examples of Barriers:

1. Continued reliance on ineffective instructional and information management strategies.

2. Failure to adopt and implement effective practices that are known and validated.

Urgency:

Without a sound research knowledge base and broad dissemination plan, we will continue to experience the same negative results.

Strategic Activities:

1. Create knowledge base activities that:

   - utilize multiple perspectives to identify what we know and do not know through a national data-based needs analysis system;
   - establish a field-based needs analysis research network to include teachers as accepted researchers;
   - validate, access, and disseminate the knowledge base to families and consumers on an ongoing preservice and inservice basis;
   - establish research and field-study partnerships between schools and universities;
   - identify sites in which best practices are implemented and can be observed by consumers; and
   - conduct research and development on:

     a. indicators of results that address not only academics, but also health, social, and emotional development issues;

     b. curricular options, adaptations, and modifications that promote active learning and participation of all children and youth;

     c. peer-mediated instructional strategies;

     d. "seamless" transition processes and systems; and

     e. research efforts, which should include model sites and longitudinal studies on the effects of inclusive education.

2. Conduct dissemination activities that:

- utilize technology to disseminate information;
- provide regional teacher resource centers and programs to train practitioners as effective consumers of research;
- provide formal mechanisms that link with teachers' unions and other associations;
- utilize journals and other publications for dissemination;
- ensure information is shared with and utilized by textbook publishers; and
- include a national multi-centered data base center that will: be the depository for all academic and technology improvement programs and applications; receive newsletters, videos, and other hard copy items from professionals, families, and children and youth; and disseminate information to regional, state, and local centers.

Issue Ten
Local Education Agency Program Development and Practices

Training of consumers and professionals and support for best practices and program development are critical to developing a system that produces improved results for children and youth with disabilities.

Examples of Barriers:

1. Children and youth with disabilities often do not have a sense of belonging and are not members of general education classes;

2. Regardless of where or how services are provided, due to time constraints, teachers are generally not involved in developing support systems and team planning;

3. Staff development is done in isolation, not coordinated, and often done without follow-up.

4. Families are rarely involved; and

5. There is a lack of interagency or community involvement.

Urgency:

Local education agency practices are critical to the provision of a free appropriate public education to children and youth with disabilities.

Strategic Activities:

1. Develop programs and practices that:

   - Integrate curricular options and effective instructional strategies;
   - Provide a list of sites that have successful supports and services that professionals and families can visit;
   - Develop student indicators for achieving better results as applied to integrated curricular options; and
   - Are disseminated to a broad audience.

2. Create partnerships that will:

   - foster a systematic, accessible network of families, professionals, children, and youth to share ideas about inclusive education, curricular options, instructional strategies, and transition systems; and
   - establish local transition councils of school staff, families, adult service providers, and employers for collaborative decision making to ensure a smooth, seamless transition for children and youth from school to adult life.

3. Allocate resources for:

- integrated curricular options created jointly by families, educators, and other professionals;
- expert assistance to develop supports and IEPs for integrated education;
- supportive services necessary to make integrative education work successfully;
- incentives for inclusive education; and
- supports provided rather than based on the child's or youth's disability.

4. Provide training for:

   - system support and training and technical assistance for school district staff to create integrated and inclusive educational services by developing and implementing curricular options and instructional strategy options;
   - a cadre of expert staff to provide LEAs assistance in IEP development, program planning, and implementing for inclusive education; and
   - inservice education to reflect current best and promising practices.

7. Develop an ongoing family-focused information system that:

   - is available at the local school level that solicits families' input, support, and cooperation;
   - assists families to develop supports; and
   - is respectful of individual cultural, social, family, and employment factors.

8. Generate and develop public support for the education of all children and youth by including families, teachers, and other service-delivery personnel to determine program directions. (Proportionate numbers of minority and culturally diverse families, teachers, and individuals with disabilities must be included.)

Issue Eleven
Technology

The enormous potential of multimedia and assistive technology has been proven, but coordinated systems have not been developed and financed to adequately provide assistive technology.

Examples of Barriers:

1. Lack of funding for maintenance;
2. Lack of professional knowledge about technology (technophobia);
3. Few qualified professionals to evaluate and assess children's and youths' technological needs and curricular applications;
4. Continuous changing nature of technology;
5. Demands an interdisciplinary team approach;
6. Viewing technology as an end, not a means (ethical use of technology);
7. Assumption that all multimedia and assistive technology is expensive and high-tech;
8. Need for information and education for consumers and families; and
9. Confusion of medical vs. related services assistive technology.

Urgency:

Many young people with disabilities require the use of multimedia and assistive technology to achieve the results defined in our vision and the mission statement, and in Goals 2000.

Strategic Activities:

1. Create a stable, broad-based human services system which promotes collaboration across agencies to meet the needs of children and youth with disabilities and their families.
2. Ensure the dissemination of knowledge and information to a broad spectrum of children and youth, families, professionals, practitioners, other consumers, and caregivers which allow communication about content. To facilitate the dissemination processes:
    - create a database, easily accessed and continually updated about technology and resources at local, regional, state, and federal levels which disseminates information about the availability of:
        a. resources that describe technology devices, standards, and services for a broad spectrum of disabling conditions;
        b. networks, resource centers, vocational rehabilitation centers, advocacy organizations, and funding services;

c. individuals to access individuals' technology needs and locate appropriate technology;

d. individuals to provide technical assistance for using, monitoring, and adjusting technology to facilitate interactions and competency between consumers and technology; and

e. companies offering equipment and technical assistance in installation and maintenance.

- create dynamic ways to use currently existing technology.

3. Ensure that collaboration occurs among children and youth, families, professionals, practitioners, and other consumers and caregivers in both the private and public sectors to promote technology access, use, funding, and dissemination about advances in the field. To achieve this collaboration:

   - create collaborative networks of experts, children and youth, families, professionals, practitioners, consumers, and caregivers in the public and private sectors;

   - establish coordinated collaborative service delivery models that include teams representing a broad spectrum of those who benefit from access to and use of technology;

   - create model site programs such as technology development laboratories that encourage collaboration between private sector corporations (such as AT&T, Bell, IBM, and Apple) and public education and health services;

   - create collaborations among advocacy organizations to ensure access to and use of technology; and

   - create public access channels that provide information and resources in collaboration with currently existing cable companies.

4. Ensure that training is provided to a broad spectrum of children and youth, families, professionals, practitioners, and other consumers and caregivers to promote technology use for future learning by developing policies which:

   - provide regular and special education teachers preservice and inservice training in using multimedia technology, assistive devices, and services that enhance teaming and the participation of children and youth with disabilities;

   - facilitate collaboration between experts and practitioners and ensure that training features practitioners demonstrating functional use;

   - create an infrastructure that promotes networking, ongoing training, and technical assistance among Institutions of High Education (IHEs), State Education Departments (SEDs), and Local Education Agencies/ School Districts/Schools (LEAs); and

   - ensure children and youth, families, and other consumers and caregivers full participation in the process of assessment, selection, and training.

5. Ensure ongoing research and development that creates and implements best practices by developing and evaluating:

   - policies and guidelines that ensure the availability of technology and maximize technology for learning and participation;

   - programs and service delivery models that promote opportunities for reciprocal interactions between individuals using technological systems/devices and peer groups on an equal basis;

- systems for assessing and analyzing technology utilization to determine if technology is being used to its fullest, and if not, how to maximize the use of current technology;
- technology that augments, not supplants or replaces, current supports or support services;
- innovative instructional technologies and assistive devices that enable individuals to function and participate independently across various settings and situations;
- strategies to integrate technology into the classroom;
- technological applications at various levels (augmentative, multimedia, etc.) by professional practitioners and other consumers and caregivers; and
- effective strategies for using multimedia and satellite technology to enhance training and learning.

6. Ensure that a system of accountability and management exists that promotes and reflects the ongoing use of current or advanced technology by:
   - building-in systems of accountability and management to all database, collaboration, training, and program development areas that provide quantitative and qualitative data on performance; and
   - tying systems of accountability and management to financing based on quality output.

7. Ensure that financing is available to purchase technology to:
   - establish and maintain database systems that disseminate information, knowledge, and resources about: 1) collaborative efforts among children and youth, families, professionals, practitioners, and other consumers and caregivers in both public and private sectors; and 2) research and development efforts that facilitate development of best practices and the implementation of those practices to enhance and expand the use of technology for individuals with disabilities;
   - train professionals to use technology to enhance learning; and
   - provide accountability and management systems that provide quantitative and qualitative data, and promote development and implementation of best practices, and that are tied to funding based on quality results.

Issue Twelve
Professional Development

The number of postsecondary institutions that have the capacity to prepare new and existing quality personnel for the education of children and youth is insufficient.

Examples of Barriers:

1. Regular education teachers are currently overwhelmed by the special needs and demands of diverse groups of children and youth in the least restrictive environments.
2. Special education training for regular education staff is minimal.
3. There is a need for a diverse and sufficient supply of qualified personnel.

Urgency:

Teachers and support personnel are at the front line of service delivery.

Strategic Activities:

1. Develop comprehensive systems of personnel development.
2. Determine what special education preparation should encompass.
3. Include teachers and related personnel in planning of professional development opportunities.
4. Create collaborative personnel preparation programs that include interaction with school districts, across-state-line models, target areas with shortages, and are results-oriented.
5. Provide preservice and inservice training that lead to meaningful and lasting changes in the performance of educators.
6. Provide preservice and inservice training that will enable practitioners to work within and across disciplines and across geographic boundaries to provide services to all children and youth.
7. Implement distance learning models and other uses of technology to provide preservice and inservice opportunities in areas with limited access to higher education institutions.
8. Include higher education institutions in educational reform and restructuring activities at the state level.
9. Enhance administrators' ability to create learning environments that are supportive of diverse learner needs.
10. Develop undergraduate education programs that require teachers to participate in a special education practical experience.